

VANTAGE *point* VII



Jiha Moon

Turbulent Utopia
Mint Museum of Art

February 2 through July 6, 2008

JIHA MOON'S expressive and seductive paintings examine the symbiotic relationships of opposites. Born in rural South Korea and now residing in Atlanta, Georgia, Moon creates dynamic compositions that synthesize abstraction and representation. Using bold brushstrokes and lyrical drawing, she employs a rich repository of symbols that reference sources from traditional Asian landscape paintings, cartography, calligraphy and iconography drawn from Western popular culture.

The genre of landscape painting serves as a point of departure for Moon, but her compositions bear no resemblance to traditional pastoral studies. While they often contain allusions to various common elements of the natural world, including rocky cliffs, swirling water and vast skies, Moon is also interested in evoking specific atmospheric conditions. She uses gestural washes of cool-toned blue, violet and green to suggest the gusts and lulls of a tempestuous wind, billowing clouds, pools of water, eddies, waterfalls and streams. Moon embellishes these washes with layers of meticulous brushwork that transform arabesque lines into fantastical dragons, birds and other flora and fauna. Through her inventive lexicon of mark making, Moon is able to devise dramatic worlds that are at once both mysterious and strangely familiar.

Moon's compositions are layered and dense, but their underlying structure consists of calligraphic flourishes and marks. The practice of traditional calligraphy is a highly disciplined art form and the resulting mark, executed with the seemingly contradictory characteristics of great haste and precision, contains elements of both certainty and chance. Creating calligraphic paintings requires the practitioner to possess mental clarity

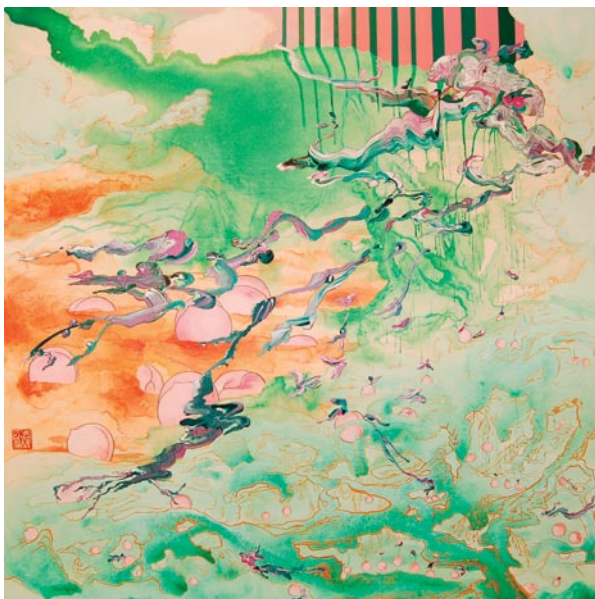
and calm concentration. As a child, Moon practiced this ancient art form as a means of disciplining the mind, hand and eye. She still employs calligraphic techniques when approaching a blank sheet of paper. The paper rests on the floor, while Moon stands or kneels above it. She saturates a brush with vibrant inks or dyes which she then applies to the paper with assured gestures. These animated lines then become the genesis for Moon's compositions as she quietly observes the markings to see what forms they might suggest. With a fine brush she then reworks these notations, and through intuitive associations, begins to coax from them figures, patterns and forms.

Moon has stated, "I am a cartographer of cultures and an icon maker in my lucid worlds. I want to be a visual interpreter of the mixed cultural worlds of my generation." Moon is acutely aware of her cross-cultural perspective. She consciously creates images of an interconnected world where people and ideas move with increasing fluidity, where social, economic and political boundaries are easily traversed, and where notions of home and history can become blurred.

Beaufort Gorge, one of the largest paintings in this exhibition, most clearly draws upon a cartographer's approach to mapping places and pathways. The thin red lines woven throughout the composition reference flight routes. In this complex work, Moon's disquieting use of varying scales and perspectives creates a perception of vast, enigmatic space. One is drawn into this tumultuous painting and encouraged to engage in a visual journey by following the curvilinear lines, mysterious marks and symbolic vignettes.



TOP: *Beaufort Gorge*



LEFT: *Peach Heaven*

RIGHT: *Sunshine Fortress, Mile Stone*

COVER: *Jade Cycle*

Other works contain references to various forms of American popular culture, from Disney animation to Pac-Man arcade games. In both *Typhoon* and *Sunshine Fortress*, Pac-Man icons are scattered throughout the compositions, creating a repetitive visual motif. Peaches, eyes, hands, dragons and rainbows are other abiding elements commonly found within Moon's paintings. These varied and idiosyncratic symbols each interject their particular associative presence within the vibrant settings that Moon creates by fusing and layering abstracted representations of earth, air and water.

Many of Moon's recent paintings are created on handmade rice paper (HanJi) from her native Korea. The warm brown tone and uneven texture of this paper is receptive to the intense hues of blues, greens, pinks and violets that Moon favors. *Jade Cycle* and *Jade Valley*, both executed on HanJi paper, were inspired by richly colored landscape paintings from the Chinese Tang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.). *Jade Cycle* investigates the journey of precipitation as raindrops form larger bodies of water—rivers and streams—and transforms again into vapor. There is also a figurative element within this composition indicated by vacant grey sleeves, which reference a monk's flowing robe. By carefully melding both painting and drawing, abstraction and representation, Moon holds in the balance numerous contradictory formal approaches.

Apparent in each of Jiha Moon's diverse compositions is an astute sensitivity to form and gesture. She masterfully melds line and color to convey both imagery and emotional states. Moon's knowledge of art historical traditions



from both Asia and Europe, as well as her ability to incorporate the lexicon of popular culture, add to the amalgam of her notations of cultural hybridity.

By combining images and fragments into wholly new compounds and ideas, Jiha Moon creates lucid worlds from her own imagination. She entices viewers to enter these disorienting environs—bursting with chaos and energy—where an epic journey may take place within a turbulent new world.

Carla M. Hanzal

Curator of Contemporary Art

Jiha Moon

Born 1973 in TaeGu, South Korea
Lives and works in Atlanta, Georgia

EDUCATION

- 2002 University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, M.F.A.
2001 University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, M.A.
1999 EWha University, Seoul, Korea, M.F.A.
1996 Korea University, Seoul, Korea, B.F.A.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2008 Headlands Center for the Arts, Golden Foundation Fellowship, Sausalito, CA
2007 Art Omi International Artists residency, Ghent, NY
Acadia Summer Art Program, Bar Harbor, ME
2006 Singapore Tyler Print Institute residency, awarded by Asia Society and Museum, New York, NY
2005 The Trawick Prize, Bethesda, MD
2004 The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC
2003 Ucross Foundation residency, Clearmont, WY
2002 Virginia Center for the Creative Arts residency, Sweet Briar, VA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 *VantagePoint VII Jiha Moon: Turbulent Utopia*, Mint Museum of Art (exhibition brochure by Carla M. Hanzal)
No Peach Heaven: MuRungDowan, Saltworks Gallery, Atlanta, GA (exhibition brochure by Stuart Horodner)
2007 *Line Tripping*, Curators Office, Washington, DC (exhibition brochure by John Ravenal)
Fabulous Fictions, Moti Hasson Gallery, New York, NY
2006 *Pleasant Purgatory*, Brain Factory, Seoul, South Korea
2005 *Symbioland*, Curator's Office, Washington, DC (exhibition brochure by Lauren Ross)
2004 *Hypermelledfictioncontradiction*, Dega Gallery, McLean, VA
2003 *I'll Meet You There*, Korean Cultural Service, Washington, DC
Moonscape, McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA
2002 *Absolute Narrative*, Eve Drewelowe Gallery, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2007 *Talent Show*, Atlanta Biennial, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA
Curated by Stuart Horodner
Levity, The Drawing Center, New York, NY (catalogue)
This Many, Saltworks Gallery, Atlanta, GA
2006 *One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now*, Asia Society and Museum, New York, NY, (catalogue)
The Real World, Katzen Art Center of American University, Washington, DC
Animalia, Irvine Contemporary, Washington, DC
2005 *The Trawick Prize; Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards*, Creative Partners gallery, Bethesda, MD
Boundaries, Contemporary Landscape, Union Gallery, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
Red Beans and Rice, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA
Strictly Painting 5, McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA
State of the Art, A Mid-Atlantic Overview, Arlington Arts Center, Arlington, VA
2004 *Semi-Lucid*, White Columns, New York, NY
Technature, Kunstoffice, Berlin, Germany
2003 *Worlds- Welton- Valdar- SaeGae*, Atelierhaus Mengerzeile, M3, Berlin, Germany
Fully Integrated, Dega Gallery, McLean, VA
2002 *Summer Salon*, Ellipse Arts Center, Arlington, VA
Midwest Ticket, Gallery 119, Chicago, IL
In Between, Byron Buford Gallery, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Asia Society and Museum, New York, NY
Art Omi International Art Center, Ghent, NY
City Hall Art Collection, The John A. Wilson Building, Washington, DC
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC
Neuberger Berman Art Collection, New York, NY
Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore
Ucross Foundation, Clearmont, WY
University of Iowa Thesis Archives, Iowa City, IA
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA

CHECKLIST

All works are ink and acrylic on HanJi paper unless otherwise noted.

Beaufort Gorge, 2007
ink and acrylic on paper
84 x 64"
Private Collection, Courtesy of Curator's Office,
Washington, DC

Heroines, 2007
58 x 30"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

J Walk, 2005
38 x 25"
Anonymous lender

Jade Cycle, 2007
36 x 24"
Museum Purchase: Exchange funds from the gifts
of various donors. 2007.83

Jade Valley, 2007
18 x 18"
Collection of Philippa and David Hughes

Mandala Tree vs. Lumberjack, 2007
ink and acrylic on paper
30 x 24"
Courtesy of J. David Ittah

Mile Stone, 2005
15 x 24"
Collection of Philip Barlow and Lisa Gilotty,
Washington, DC

Myth Series: Abduction, 2006
22 x 21"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

Myth Series: Jelly Velly, 2006
21 x 15 ¾"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

Myth Series: Piñata Garden, 2006
25 x 40"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

Myth Series: Possible Hand, 2006
ink and acrylic on HanJi paper
27 ½ x 17"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

Myth Series: Skyscape, 2006
25 x 40"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

Myth Series: White Waterfall, 2006
21 ¾ x 30 ¾"
Collection of Jane and Ishaia Gol

Peach Heaven, 2007
acrylic on HanJi paper
30 x 30"
Collection of Larry and Karan Kennedy, Atlanta, GA

Persica Route, 2007
ink and acrylic on HanJi paper
37 x 25"
Collection of Kate Nicholson

Spectro Park, 2005
38 x 25"
Collection of Henry H. and Carol Brown Goldberg

Sunshine Fortress, 2005
38 x 25"
Collection of Joanne Heyler

The Official Visit, 2007
58 x 30"
Courtesy of the Artist and Moti Hasson Gallery,
New York

The Winds, 2007
ink and acrylic on HanJi paper on canvas
30 x 30"
Courtesy of the Artist and Moti Hasson Gallery,
New York

Typhoon, 2007
35 ½ x 25"
Courtesy of the Artist and Curator's Office,
Washington, DC

Where Are They (Super Heroes), 2007
30 x 24"
Collection of Jill Gerstenblatt, Courtesy of Moti Hasson
Gallery, New York

VantagePoint is an ongoing contemporary art series presented by the Mint Museum of Art. Each exhibition features artwork that explores recent, significant developments and approaches to creative expression.

This presentation of Jiha Moon's work marks her first solo museum exhibition. The Mint Museum of Art gratefully acknowledges the support of Curator's Office, Washington, DC, and Moti Hasson Gallery, New York, NY. We thank all of the lenders to the exhibition, and especially thank the artist, Jiha Moon, for her insight and generosity.



The Mint Museum is supported, in part, with a Basic Operating Grant from the Arts & Science Council, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc.; the North Carolina Arts Council, an agency funded by the State of North Carolina and the National Endowment for the Arts; the City of Charlotte; and its members.



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